5/16/70

Dear Mary,

Your letter of the 14th happens to be the first of today's mail I've opened (great report to Bud!) I drop everything for a quick response. When I say "everything" I am hopeful of enclosing a convincing sample.

Because you have but the word of an ill boy for what must have seemed incredible when he reported it to you, I hasten to assure you, on the basis of my own painful experience, that if it is really terrible he probably understated. They are that bad or strange, however you look at it/them. And it exactly parallel's my own experiences with them and out there.

You will recall, if you think, I have never mentioned my own extensive experiences in the LA area to you, or any of the people. This is because there is already too much disunity among us. If there is a single one of that bunch that is honorable, rational, unselfish and trustworthy or who has done any meanin ful work in years, none of it is to my experience with them. They make the most horrible accusations, say and manufacture the vilest things and, to top it all off, are simply going crazy for recognition and in not infrequent cases are crooks. You must be without doubt of Jimmy and he should know you trust his account. I am not suggesting either is not the case, but if he is unwell, I think his having the assurance I suggest, that this did not happen to him alone and that you have independent confirmation, may help him feel that he is not doubted, even if he doesn't show it.

As you request, I am making no copy of this for Gary. However, he knows more about that bunch than ever I, and here I introduce something to you that I hope you will not find unwelcome. It is simply that having been silent for what I considered necessary reasons, this experience of yours and the other suggestions of partial knowledge you indicate impel me to tell you the rest.

On each and every one of my trips to California my expenses were assured in advance, and in each case it was, as it had to be, a precondition. The first trip, which required that I abandon WHITEWASH II as it came out, and I do not have to tell you what this cost in sales and attention, was at the repeated beseeching of Maggie Fields and Bill O'Connell, because Liebeler had (true)Mark on the ropes and was hurting all of them. I despise Mark, who has been a crook from the first and irresponsible to boot. But I went out there, having challenged Liebeler in advance to four confrontations, all of which he avoided, and I actually defended Mark (limiting the defense to where it was honest). Bill treated me very kindly, was my thoughtful host (and his grandma is one of the world's great gals). He fed me most of the time, drove me around, etc. But not one cent of my actual costs was ever paid back. Maggie gave me a limp sandwich and copious smiles. I think a maybe a scotch and water, too. I was exhausted before I began, and that trip included NY, Phila, Chicago, Madison, Asic to Milwaukee to Madison(from Chicago to the return to Madison all in one day!), back to Chicago, to SF (where not one night did I have three hours sleep -in a week-and once I didn't even get in bed, thence to LA, where I wore them out-all to defend us. Next to my last trip, Steve Burton arranged for me to stay with the Newcombs, strangers to me, and they were, really, very, very nice. Perhaps you will understand if I say in some ways Marlyn was a little too nice. I provided Fred with the beginning of his work on the rifle pictures, including prints made from the originals, as I recall, and leads on an enormous amount more. Well, with Dave Lifton the ring-leader, ever since then it has been just the opposite, with the mildest charges being of a personal nature and of thievery of the work of others attributed to me. Although collectively they had ever done anything worth stealing.

In truth this amounted to a real campaign, conducted quietly so it wouldn't get back to me, but infrequently it did. The immediate result was they turned off several promising young people who had, under direction by mail, done some worthwhile things for me.

Not knowing that I regard Gary as a man my age regards a fine son and being unaware of the warmth of his feeling for me, Lifton and Fred kept pummelling Gary with all sorts of slop. Gary slougned it off. When we felt frustrated, Lifton finally challenged Gary to confront me with his charges, apparently confident he wouldn't but would find the challenge persuasive. Having had a bellyful, Gary did just that. I took the time off, invested copying paper I could ill afford, and send Gary, not for any use, copies of the letters of each of these many swine to me. I could directly and in their own words refute, as I recall, every one of their charges except one, that personal thing the Newcombs alleged, but the character of their subsequent letters leaves little doubt of its spurious character. Lifton's lurid account of my attempted fleecing of the Reseda students, if you've heard that one, is in every detail the opposite of truth, as Gary can show you, for I'll have no more to do with it or them, and the reality is that when I finally got Liebler hooked to a format, in public, where he could not filibuster and where we were both guaranteed unrestricted terms of our debate, an organized kkk one with a moderator, Dave intruded and broke it up. The sole accomplishment was to get Liebler off the hook. I'd already, if poorly considering what I could have done, done to Liebler, in public, that which has since sealed his mouth.

The degree to which they have all carried this you will perhaps understand better if I tell you that the LAFree Press has never once mentioned my name or my work, except to attribute it to others, has never paid the 25 books they got, will not respond to any letter asking for payment, and even the citizens' committee, to which I gave books for xxxxx a contribution, alleges it did not get an insured package for which the post office provided me with a receipt ((as I recall, about $70-100 involved) and returned for credit that which I had given them as a contribution.

Is there anything else you want to know of our LA colleagues? Even Maggie is quoted as saying she always suspected I wanted to steal her book. I have nothing from it, never did, never sought any of it, and instead provided her with documents I thought she could use. Moreover, when she had a contract with Random House, I met R-H's pr gal at the book convention and offered, without ever having read it, to plug and promote her book (they'd never heard of such a thing). The last trip out there I had to sleep on the couch of a young divorced woman, with Maggie having that enormous house. Fortunately, there was no subsequent foul talk, perhaps because this young woman can express herself.

I have never asked you this big thing Dave claims to have, though I know you have it. If it is his, so far as I am concerned, I do not want it and it belongs to him. However, and again Gary can confirm it, Dave is both skilled at it and diligently has conducted an espionage campaign against my work and me. What really shakes us up is that in at least one case he has knowledge of what neither Gary nor I can recall ever mentioning to anyone else and a matter on which neither sent copies to others. I suspect that in some manner, perhaps legal if not improper, Dave has come accross some of what I have turned up or, as you will see when you are here, forced out. Paul, of whom I have seen but little, he was worked that intensively, is satisfied of my suspicion, that the Archives is making such things inevitable to deny me the effective use of them and to insure the best chance of improper or irresponsible use, thus reducing the impact of significant things. If it is medico-autopsy, you can be sure. But, when you are here, my files will be open to you and you can see. Took too long. Thanks and best to all,